from the Editor.
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POLITICAL CONFERENCES

BETWEEN

SEVERAL GREAT MEN,

IN THE

LAST AND PRESENT CENTURY.

WITH NOTES BY THE EDITOR.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Reader may poſſibly be induced to aſk, if theſe Conferences are genuine? I anſwer, that I am only the Editor. According to the preſent faſhion of depoſiting State Papers, for the inſpection of curioſity, in the hands of ſome reſpectable perſon, the Editor would have been glad to have had it in his power to have left the Original Manuſcripts in the hand-writing of one of the Interlocutors, for public ſatisfaction, with Mr. CADELL the Bookſeller. But if theſe men (as great men as England ever ſaw) expreſs them-

ſelves juſt as they are made to do in our moſt authentic and circumſtantial hiſtories, he can ſee no uſeful reaſon for treating their converſations as fictitious. Depend upon it, they are more real than half the orations and dialogues, civil or political, of Grecian or Roman hiſtorians and rhetoricians, and will give as legitimate information as our parliamentary debates. Take an inſtance that preſents itſelf to the memory and pen of the Editor. The Conference recorded by Dion Caſſius, between Auguſtus, Agrippa, and Mæcenas, is related with all the formal minuteneſs of real converſation. It was upon the greateſt queſtion that could be diſcuſſed in the Cabinet or the Senate; no leſs, than whether Auguſtus ſhould retain his power, or reſtore the Commonwealth. In the opinion of diſcerning perſons, this converſation never could happen. Auguſtus no more than Oliver Cromwell

well would ſuffer ſuch a matter to be debated, that could lead to depoſing himſelf, or abdicating the Government. What is out of character, muſt be out of truth. It is preſumed, there is no ſuch diſtortion of features in any of the Political Dramatis Perſonæ in this Collection. For the veracity of theſe Cloſet Converſations, there cannot, in the nature of the thing, be many vouchers. Now they are preſented to the world, and exhibit all the internal marks of having been once the living language of the appropriated perſonages, the Editor hopes they may be acceptable to the Lovers of Secret Hiſtory and of Anecdote. Clarendon, Whitlock, D'Ewes, and others, give us many important expreſſions, opinions, and debates of Senatorial Men, which would have been loſt but for their having preſerved them in their memorials and journals. It is owing to the forward zeal of the preſent Editor, that the following private Conferences,

ferences, on that account perhaps the more intereſting, are reſcued from oblivion, and thus are permitted to ſee the light.

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CON-

CONFERENCE I.

Lord STRAFFORD and Mr. PYM.

PYM.

EXCUSE my freedom. I hate apoſtacy, and I can hardly bear the ſight of a man who has changed his principles. When you quitted the Commons, and ſolicited a ſeat in the other Houſe, I ſaw clearly you was deſerting the cauſe of the people.

STRAFFORD.

Did I not oppoſe all illegal proceedings for ſeveral years, at the expence of my perſonal liberty, with as much energy and eloquence as the beſt of you all? And had I not as much merit as any one in procuring the *Bill*

of Rights that has made you all ſafe? I think the people have obtained all that you can deſire for them, and that the prerogative is pared cloſe enough.

PYM.

You could not withſtand the ſunſhine of Royal Favour. You have made an ill exchange for yourſelf. The people will never forgive your deſerting them for the bauble of a peerage: they will be always apprehenſive you will employ your influence and great abilities againſt them. Was it worth while to gratify the wiſhes of one perſon at the expence of your honour? to venture the indignation of all good men, by going out of the path you ſet out in, and ſhould have continued in during your political life?

STRAFFORD.

I hope I have not loſt the good opinion of wiſe and honeſt men. I have not forſaken nor loſt ſight of the intereſt of my country: I am in love with its government and its laws: I have it now in my power to ſerve it

it with my advice, which my Royal Maſter condeſcends to aſk and to accept. Whilſt I continued in Oppoſition, I could only endeavour to prevent ſome wrong things from being done. By means of my preſent ſituation, I can procure ſome poſitive good.

PYM.

When did you know a Miniſter of State a real Patriot? Before he can permit himſelf to think for the good of the people, he muſt ſacrifice to the humour and intereſt of thoſe who brought him in, and are to keep him in place; and procure emoluments for himſelf, for his friends, and for his party. The people's eyes are now open, and they diſcover the deſigns of the Court: they require an additional ſet of grievances to be redreſſed. The Bill of Rights has been eluded; nay, trampled upon. Prerogative is every day exerted againſt the ſafety of the people. The Lord Deputy of Ireland will be adjudged the author of all they have to complain of, from the moment he changed ſides, and became one of the Cabinet.

STRAFFORD.

I have no objection to a ſober remonſtrance of the people, nor to comply with their reaſonable deſires: but they ſhould not be taught to aſk for new rights, to the irreparable injury of the Crown. The abuſe of prerogative may now and then produce ſome inconvenience, but the preponderancy of democracy may occaſion the loſs of the whole. You are too hard upon the ſervants of the Crown. It may be your good or bad fortune, ſome time or other, when your notions are more accommodating, to be invited into ſome high, reſponſible office, and then you will feel it to be unbecoming of old friendſhip, to have it doubted to your face, whether a Miniſter of State can be an honeſt man.

PYM.

The Court meaſures, and manners alſo, muſt undergo a thorough change, before Pym could allow himſelf to participate of them. I am a determined champion for the people. They truſt me, and I will never betray them.

I will

I will not advance a ſtep to greatneſs, to their inconvenience. In contradiction to your high-flown notions of monarchy, I aſſert, that I would rather ſee England ſettled in a commonwealth, than the ſpirit of the nation ſubdued, and their ſacred privileges made to depend upon the breath of a King, and on Court favour. The tone and language you held juſt now become tolerably well the Lord Deputy of Ireland, but are unworthy the magnanimity of Sir Thomas Wentworth.

STRAFFORD.

In my higheſt flights, whilſt a Commoner, my heart was never averſe to monarchy. I was then neither a Puritan nor an Arminian. The more opportunities I poſſeſs of knowing the King, the more ſtrongly am I attached to his perſon and authority. A King of England is not to be reduced to the inſignificance of a Doge of Venice. Since the murder of Buckingham, who ruled, I confeſs, with a very high hand, the King has no favourite. He has taken upon him the taſk of being more his own Miniſter; and

therefore you have not ſo much reaſon to apprehend any violation of popular rights.

PYM.

I am afraid I ſhall hardly be able to contain my temper within juſt bounds, ſince you give me ſuch advantages in the courſe of our converſation. Is the governing without parliaments, or convening them on purpoſe to diſſolve them, what you commend in his Majeſty's proclamation? Is it a proceeding you will avow yourſelf the adviſer of? Are the variety of impoſitions and taxes expected to be borne patiently by the people at large, till they have a hope of remedy from their repreſentatives in St. Stephen's Chapel? Are the conjoint terms, "No Biſhop no King," to iſſue from the pulpit eternally? Are the High Commiſſion and Star-Chamber Courts to lord it over our conduct and our conſciences, like the Popiſh Inquiſition? Is liberty of ſpeech and of complaint to be taken away?

STRAF-

STRAFFORD.

There is ſo bad and diſcontented a ſpirit abroad, that the King does not think it ſafe nor expedient to call a Parliament. Why ſhould not the King have his prerogatives, as well as the people their privileges? Take care how you make the little finger of the prerogative heavier than the whole loins of the law. The King can do no wrong. He will protect his ſervants, who will not be afraid to execute the legal orders that are committed to them. He will not let them be impeached by every ſeditious orator in the Lower Houſe, nor ſuffer himſelf to be menaced out of his government. If he is at this moment not ſo well inclined to increaſe the rights of his ſubjects, he will not diminiſh their number. He will keep inviolate his coronation oath; and where he protects, he expects obedience. When he ſees fit, and obſerves the people will let him be in love with parliaments, he will call one.

PYM.

PYM.

I tremble for you, when that day arrives. You will do well to defer that hour as long as you can. The people in the mean time will be increaſing their clamorous demands. When the body of the people is ſo greatly injured and inflamed, there is no ſaying where their fury may begin or may end. They will have all their privileges aſcertained and enlarged, demand freſh ſecurities for their religion and their property, and expel all arbitrary and evil Miniſters from the throne.

STRAFFORD.

I ſee we are not likely to return to our former good fellowſhip, nor to part with mild inclinations to each other. You fancy yourſelf already exhibiting a catalogue of grievances, that are to be reported afterwards to the deluded multitude. I hope you have no intentions of removing old land-marks, nor altering the eſtabliſhed forms of the monarchy.

PYM.

PYM.

It ſurely cannot be high-treaſon to endeavour to mend the conſtitution, when it is found to be out of order, and even giving way? When that is become neceſſary, as ſoon as an opportunity preſents, the people, the origin of all power, and for whom all government is made, will not perhaps pay a ſuperſtitious regard to the forms that are erected, but will right themſelves in their own way.

STRAFFORD.

I am ready to face a parliament and an impeachment, even brought up by yourſelf. My integrity is a breaſt-plate, and the King will not ſuffer a hair of my head to be touched. I little thought, at one time, you would have denounced ſuch enmity againſt me, and that our intereſts ſhould have been ſo wide aſunder. Our retroſpects have ſet our opinions at variance. I wiſh our profeſſed regard for the public could induce us to conſult together, in order to prevent any tumults that may poſſibly ariſe, and might

 involve

involve the nation in anarchy and civil commotion. If the account of my former behaviour does not ſatisfy you, I am prepared to offer you more apologies for my line of conduct.

PYM.

The die is already thrown. You have choſen your ſide, and I have taken mine. There is no occaſion for more apologies for your behaviour nor your principles. In one word, my Lord, you have left us; but I will never leave you, while you have a head upon your ſhoulders.

NOTE.

Wentworth was reconciled to the Court, and made a Viſcount in 1628, and Lord Deputy of Ireland in 1633. Carte and other writers acknowledge a converſation of an high expoſtulatory nature between Strafford and Pym (the particular day the Editor cannot aſcertain), which ended with this threatening declaration. Pym carried up his impeachment to the Lords, and made his words good, by purſuing him to the block. Pym ſhortened his days in the popular cauſe, as did his

his compatriot Hampden, in Chalgrave-field. Strafford had been a ſtaunch oppoſer of arbitrary meaſures; and had, in the tone of a good Engliſhman, contended, that grievances and [redacted] ſhould go hand in hand: but he was melted by the ſunſhine of the Court. Clarendon obſerves, that his deſtruction was brought on him by the two things he affected the moſt in the world to deſpiſe—the People, and Sir Harry Vane. A dreadful leſſon to the apoſtates from the cauſe of liberty!—A truly patriotic Marquis, who needs not to be farther pointed out, deſcended from this unfortunate Stateſman, and who is poſſeſſed of equal firmneſs and a milder temper, had the judgment, a few ſeſſions ago, to pledge himſelf, not to incur, like his anceſtor, the popular ill-will, but to adhere to the people as long as they ſhould adhere to him. It is no wonder, therefore, he ſtands ſo high in the opinion of all lovers of their country.

CONFERENCE II.

SIR HARRY VANE AND MR. WHITLOCK.

[Conjectured about the Beginning of December 1644.]

VANE.

AS we both make the people's welfare our principal aim, and are men of public hearts, though we ſeek the Lord in a different way, and travel our political journey through ſeparate roads, I wanted to diſcourſe with a man of your temper and diſcernment, about a matter that, in my judgment, is expedient for me, as one of the Saints, to propoſe to the Houſe, as a further illuſtration of my ſincerity, and a greater notoriety of my zeal.

WHITLOCK.

You have already preſented yourſelf with ſo much fervency and diſintereſtedneſs, and alſo

alſo abhorrence of the Royal cauſe, that no additional proofs of devotion to your party, nor of integrity to your country, ſeem to be required at your hands. The part you took in bringing forward the *ſolemn league and covenant*, and your unremitted activity againſt *Lord Strafford*, would remove any ſuſpicions of your firmneſs.

VANE.

I charge myſelf, before the Lord and the good people of England, with the appearance of being guided by worldly conſiderations, in that I continue to receive the wages of a lucrative poſt in the ſtate. The order of parliament, that every family ſhall deprive itſelf of a meal every week, and contribute the expence of one, ſhall not prevent the oblation of my intended free gift. Though my appointment was before the troubles began, yet I chooſe not to ſeem to grow rich in proportion as my country grows poor. Therefore I reſolve to appropriate the greateſt part of the enormous income of my place, now increaſed tenfold, towards carrying on this

this juſt and neceſſary war, and, in a right time, the treaſurerſhip of the navy itſelf. I do not expect the carnal-mindedneſs of your profeſſion to forego the profits of a ſingle term in Weſtminſter-hall, nor to plead the cauſe even of God's people for nothing.

WHITLOCK.

If you chooſe to give up your grant and relinquiſh your office, through the fatigue of it, or for conſcience ſake, there is no harm done, as I can ſee. But I do not diſcover the abſolute obligation of ſerving the public for nothing, and of reducing one's ſelf to a penurious condition, to gratify any ſet of men. Sir Harry, you are born to accompliſh great things, and ſhould not poſſeſs your imagination with ſuch fanatical notions, either that your ſervices are unworthy, or that they ought to go without compenſation.

VANE.

Conſcience dictates to me, that the precedent and example muſt come from me, of perfect contempt of private intereſt, and

of

of the incumbency of ſerving our country without perquiſite or ſalary. The war is not half ended. I believe the peace of the kingdom cannot be procured by your friends. It requires the interpoſition of men of another ſtamp. I wiſh you to obſerve, as I obſerve to you, that the people have not a ſufficient number of their repreſentatives to do their buſineſs in parliament. In the conſult and enacting of laws, there cannot be too great a number of legiſlators, and our Houſe cannot have too many of its Members preſent for that purpoſe. The various employments in the land and ſea ſervice keep ſo many of the Members from their ſenatorial duty, that an immediate remedy muſt be found for ſo great an inconvenience.

WHITLOCK.

If this is a crying evil, what correction does your profound genius ſuggeſt?

VANE.

I have it in my contemplation to offer to the Houſe, in the courſe of a few days, a *ſelf-denying Ordinance.*

WHIT-

WHITLOCK.

Open yourſelf fully and freely.

VANE.

I ſhall do ſo, and I am ready to hear and to obviate your objections. To give dignity to the repreſentation of the people, and to demonſtrate the purity and upright intentions of all within the Houſe; I propoſe, that they ſhall hold their ſeats, without receiving any honour from ourſelves, or the mammon of unrighteouſneſs from any office or place.

WHITLOCK.

Do you think an honeſt man will give a wrong vote, becauſe he fills a place of ſome value? Many of the beſt ſervants of the public, who have by merit obtained a ſeat, and have come into it without hereditary or acquired wealth, and dedicate their time and talents for the benefit of the ſtate, require the liberal accommodations of life and official profits, for domeſtic purpoſes. Who ſo likely to diſcharge the function of employment, or ſo fit for your confidence, as thoſe of your own order and rank? If the Ordinance gets through

through your Houſe, yet it may not be approved by the Upper one. We have not yet done with the King. I cannot bring myſelf to imagine, that the Peers can be induced to give their conſent.

VANE.

The laudable willingneſs in the Commons to give up their incomes and their poſts, will make them very dear to the people without doors, and may ſtimulate the Peers to tread in their ſteps; otherwiſe, you may perceive by and bye, that they are not ſo conſiderable in the ſtate, nor capable of hindering the deſigns of the patriots in the other Houſe. The people of England will be taught to look up to us; and down upon them. We are the reformers of all the evil and corruption under which the nation groans. This renunciation propounded, of taking away all places from the Members of both Houſes, is to affect them in the military as well as civil capacity.

WHITLOCK.

Let me apprehend you right. You propoſe, that no Member of either Houſe ſhall

enjoy any office or command, military or civil.

VANE.

That is preciſely the object of the bill I intend to offer. Saints muſt not be ſelf-ſeekers, nor men of this world.

WHITLOCK.

I think your Ordinance is laying an immediate foundation for throwing us into more confuſion, and will make a difference between the Houſes; beſides, it will be giving ſome advantages to the King and his party. Your diſcarding your great commanders, who have fought and bled for you, and helped you to triumph over your enemies, and taking away their commiſſions, let me tell you, is neither fair nor juſt. You have done wiſely to repoſe yourſelves in men of family and eſtate. They have been true to you; and when the war is at an end, which all reaſonable men hope may be ſpeedily, they are prepared to melt the ſoldier in the citizen.

VANE.

VANE.

Things have taken a better turn than they portended at the beginning of the troubles. The new men are become excellent officers, have had great experience, and may be depended upon. Eſſex, Warwic, Mancheſter, Waller, and others, may be induced to comply with this intended regulation, and reſign their commiſſions.

WHITLOCK.

I have not the leaſt doubt, that this great change of men and meaſures will produce extraordinary effects. Without the gift of prophecy, or of the Spirit, to which you make pretenſions, I may affirm, the ſame ſuperior artifice that is going to be employed to deprive theſe men of their military honours, will ſomehow and ſoon be directed to rob them of their parliamentary rights and privileges. If you have undertaken to exert the force of your eloquence and authority, to procure this new model of the army, ſince you do me the honour to conſult my opinion, take my proteſt againſt the fatal enſuing conſequences.

VANE.

I have embarked with ſeveral worthy gentlemen in this affair, and have promiſed to go through with it. This *Ordinance* inveſts Fairfax with the command of the army, and with the power of filling up every commiſſion, and appoints Oliver Cromwell his Lieutenant-General.

WHITLOCK.

Then the army has very little to do, after it has concluded your buſineſs, if it does not ſtop ſhort firſt, but to ſet up for itſelf whenever it ſees convenient. Whoever has the power of the ſword, will not be ſatisfied till it obtains every thing *that* power can procure. Take care how you proceed in this buſineſs. Mark my words. A Fairfax, or even a Cromwell, if he can over-reach the underſtanding of his General, will come and pull you all out of your ſeats, and put an end to you as a Houſe of Commons, and I think will ſerve you right.

VANE.

VANE.

When the army is thoroughly purged of the Preſbyterian leaven (and I know no other method of doing it), with the ſword of the Lord and of Gideon, they will go forth and fight our battles, and not wax faint as others have done.

WHITLOCK.

You have not ſufficiently digeſted this matter. You are deſerting a plain direction of policy, of keeping inſeparably together the civil and military departments, where the legiſlative and executive powers are exerciſed by a popular aſſembly. The uniform practice of Greece and Rome, in their times of freedom, is againſt you. Their ſenators and great men led their armies. The military was made out of the civil character. The people thought they might truſt the ſword and their cauſe in one of their own body. The Parliament has no apprehenſion it can be betrayed or ill-uſed by one of themſelves. They know all is ſafe, when they can diſband more eaſily than get an army together. What is it you are endeavouring

deavouring to procure by this bill? Is it to have a maſter?

VANE.

The army thus modelled, and the *Ordinance* paſſing, with an exception or two, I think we ſhall be able to manage it to our purpoſe. The Preſbyterians, indeed, firſt drew the ſword againſt the King, but the Independents are willing to fling away the ſcabbard. The new commiſſion of Fairfax is not to be ſo ſcrupulouſly worded in favour of the perſon of the King, as that of Eſſex or of Mancheſter.

WHITLOCK.

So, you intend to court the protection of the military ſaints! for your proſcription of all the moderate and deſerving men who begun the oppoſition to ſhip-money, epiſcopacy, the ſtar-chamber and high commiſſion court, is written in as legible characters as the hand-writing on the wall in the prophet Daniel. Do you ſuppoſe an independent army, nay, let me alſo mark it by another diſtinction, a mighty hoſt of men that is now

to

to fight for pay and plunder, will be content to take its orders from the unarmed, and perhaps cowardly ſpirit of a Houſe of Commons? The point of the ſword will be levelled at your own throats, and at the vitals of the conſtitution, and peremptorily dictate what is to be done. Your free proceedings will ſoon be checked. Petitions and remonſtrances will come thick upon you. The military ſubaltern knows no rule of conduct but martial law, and will be obliged to execute whatever his General commands. Pompey, like an obedient and unambitious ſubject, entered Rome, a mere private man, and left his army without the gates. But the deciſive Cæſar, in ſpite of the votes of the Senate, croſſed the Rubicon and made himſelf Dictator. Your mercenary army will ſoon erect itſelf into a military parliament, and you will have more to dread from it, than from monarchy and the unſubdued forces of the King.

VANE.

The new army will out-pray and out-preach, and therefore out-fight the old one. The King

King muſt be reduced to greater ſtraits before he will ſubmit. This is left for the Independents. The Preſbyterians will not go through the work cheerfully. They are for peace upon any terms. A great deal remains to be done, before England can be ſettled in a free ſtate. When that is accompliſhed, the reign of *Chriſt's Kingdom* is to begin. I follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Unconvincing and unconvinced, I now take my leave.

NOTE.

Clarendon, Whitlock, Warwick, and Hollis, give us a copious account of the riſe, progreſs, and fate of the bill that is the ſubject of this Conference, and which, in different ſhapes, has been preſented to the Houſe by all the real and mock patriots down to the preſent moment. It muſt be confeſſed, that Whitlock, though he mentions his oppoſing in the Houſe *the ſelf-denying Ordinance*, and gives us his arguments, yet is ſilent with regard to this previous converſation with Vane. But this does not convince the Editor of its being void of foundation. Burnet mentions the method, and it may be recommended to

to our ſenatorial men, of Sir Thomas Littleton, who uſed to talk over with him in the beſt manner he was able, what he intended to ſpeak in the Houſe, and deſired him to reply with all his force. I believe he went over with Burnet, the arguments for and againſt the Excluſion bill. But, to uſe the words of Bolingbroke, this laſt anecdote I deliver upon memory, not having the book before me. Sir Harry Vane was over-reached himſelf (though on another occaſion he over-reached the whole kingdom of Scotland, and was indeed a man who ſaw very far into the minds of other people, while he admirably concealed his own), firſt, by Cromwell, and then by Monk. After the reſtoration of monarchy, to which he was totally undevoted, he was illegally offered up to the injured manes of Lord Strafford, whoſe attainder was reverſed the firſt ſeſſions. Another word about this extraordinary man, extraordinary in his aſpect, as well as character. Vane's pretences to inſpiration, and his ſetting himſelf *above human ordinances*, made him unfit to pace in the trammels of ſubjection to any known forms of government. Charles the Second, who did not think the crown firm on his head till a method was adopted to get rid of him, might have ſaid, as Cromwell did to his face, when he turned out the Long Parliament, " The Lord deliver me from Sir

" Harry Vane!" Whitlock obtained his pardon when the King came over, and by his order retired into the country; where he died (after having wrote for the prerogative he had conſtantly oppoſed) about the year 1675 or 1676. He was a man of excellent talents and of great candour. He was charged with being a temporizer. He arrived at the head of his profeſſion. When the Rump Parliament was reſtored, Scot the regicide, and Secretary of State, threatened to have him hanged, with the Great Seal about his neck. Though favoured by Cromwell, he was ſent out of the way for a while, on an embaſſy to Chriſtina, Queen of Sweden. If the very ſingular advice he gave to General Fleetwood, which he mentions in his Memorials, which contain the moſt impartial account of the civil wars, had been taken, it might have prevented the reſtoration of monarchy, or have diſappointed Monk of the honour and the advantages he derived from it.

CONFERENCE III.

OLIVER CROMWELL, LORD PROTECTOR, AND EDMUND WALLER, OF BEACONSFIELD.

[Supposed to be held at Whitehall, sometime in 1654.]

CROMWELL.

AS the door was not shut, you overheard part of the conversation without.—Cousin Waller! I must talk to these men after their own way.

WALLER.

Your Highness has enough to do to accommodate yourself to people of so many different humours, who desire to speak with you.

CROMWELL.

And yet, that is the labour of my whole life. I find I am a match for men of all principles;

for the Saints, the Godly Republicans, your Monarchy-men, Millenarians, Papiſts, and I think every ſect, except the Heathens; I mean Harrington, Nevil, Sydney, and the reſt, upon whom I can make no impreſſion.

WALLER.

The vaſtneſs of the genius of your Highneſs enables you to ſet all theſe people right, and to find ſufficient arguments to prove them to be in the wrong. But were not your own intentions ſo pure and ſo clear, might not your pre-eminent talent in overcoming the ſcruples of ſo many, and in bending them to your purpoſe, obtain an influence over their minds and conſciences, that is not ſafe to be lodged in any one perſon?

CROMWELL.

There is no occaſion for theſe fulſome compliments. But I believe they ariſe naturally from that polite temper that was bred in Courts and nurſed in Parliaments. Whilſt I think on it, let me applaud your muſe for your panegyric, to my Lord Protector. Now

we

we are together, I would have you ſpeak to me very plainly, for there is nobody to liſten or to betray us.

WALLER.

Your permitting me to return from baniſhment, aſſures you of my moſt unfeigned gratitude and pious wiſhes for the prolongation of your life and government. If your Highneſs takes me into the boſom of your confidence, my familiarity ſhall follow of courſe.

CROMWELL.

What would you have one in my ſtation do? I muſt preſerve myſelf at all events, by keeping the ſame line of conduct that brought me hither. I muſt uſe every artifice to entice every body into my intereſt. I faſted and prayed with the Saints, and was even a preacher of ſermons, and with very good ſucceſs, as long as I found that meaſure to be abſolutely neceſſary. In my preſent elevation, I ſpare nor money, nor promiſes, nor even tears, to perpetuate my authority, to enſure my ſafety, and extend the glory of my country. Any one that I hear is fit for

my

my purpoſe, I get into my ſervice, by every method I can think of. Provided I find my account in engaging men to come over to me, my mind never revolts at what I have done. My ends muſt ſanctify my means.

WALLER.

You have admirable expedients for keeping things together, and playing one party againſt the other.

CROMWELL.

To be free with you, I conſider myſelf, and it is not unuſual amongſt the Saints, as a man above all ordinances. Whatever is neceſſary, with me is lawful. That which would be hypocriſy, duplicity, and tyranny, in another (and which I ſhould think to be ſuch, in my private condition) are the juſtifiable engines of my government.

WALLER.

Your Highneſs would not ſleep in ſafety in your bed, if the notion upon which you act were made too public. For, if every man

(I preſume only to ſpeak logically, on the principle) is above ordinances, and every man has a right to judge what is neceſſary to himſelf, and to make that neceſſity juſtify all the means, every man is at liberty to do what he will.

CROMWELL.

The maxim is only for the benefit of the elect. Even Sir Harry Vane notoriouſly thinks thus of himſelf, and therefore, ſhall not I? It is to me the call to exerciſe unlimited power, for the good of the people, who are entruſted to my charge. I ſee my way pretty well before me, becauſe I poſſeſs a kind of intuitive knowledge of the intentions of mankind, and am able to meaſure the ſize of their underſtandings.

WALLER.

Your Highneſs is certainly a more favoured man than Sir Harry Vane,

CROMWELL.

To go on. By my ſuperior penetration into the moſt diſguiſed characters, I have been too

too many for every one who has been in the way of my pretenſions. I became maſter of the ſpirit of Fairfax, and made him pave the ſtep to my command of the army, and to the poſt of Chief Magiſtrate. I flatter Lambert with the hopes of ſucceeding me, though I mean no ſuch thing; and ſo keep him in obedience and dependence upon me. When I thought my influence in the army was going to be affected, I conjured up, and laid afterwards, though with perſonal hazard, the dangerous riſing of the agitators.—Couſin Waller! my rule is, to perform every thing in the name of the Lord.

WALLER.

Whilſt the people are willing to believe you on your word, that you ſeek the Lord on all occaſions, you will certainly find them ſubmiſſive enough to your will and pleaſure.

CROMWELL.

To be frank with you, I have made a laughable buſineſs before now of this. For the Saints knocked at the door, whilſt a conſultation of officers was held in a room on

matters

matters of the laſt importance, where we refuſed them admittance, by telling them we were ſeeking the Lord, when, in truth, we were only ſeeking the cork-ſcrew that fell under the table.

WALLER.

I know that a pleaſant humour, and even a piece of buffoonery, now and then, have ſerved you in good ſtead. Your Highneſs now puts on a ſtronger armour. Whilſt you propagate and ſupport the doctrine, that *Dominion is founded in Grace*, you will not ſuffer yourſelf to be ſtripped of your power. It will not be eaſy to take out of your hand the ſword of the Lord and of Gideon.

CROMWELL.

Beſides my argument from ſucceſs and nomination by Parliament, I had a revelation in my childhood (which I am told is handed about), that I ſhall enjoy unlimited power.

WALLER.

So had Numa, ſo had Manco Capac, and every great warrior and legiſlator. The de-

claration of the oracle is verified, and you are happily arrived at the pinnacle of human veneration.

CROMWELL.

And yet, this is not all. The viſion ſpoke darkly and doubtfully about my being King. This, joined to my recollection of a character in a play I perſonated, whilſt a Royſter at Cambridge, where a crown and ſceptre fell into my lap, which at that moment, as a lucky omen, I took to myſelf, though I ſince totally forgot it, till after Worceſter fight, makes me think there may be ſomething in it. But my weight of greatneſs is already heavier than I can bear. I am not a man to be diſcomfited or elevated by a dream. Time is the beſt interpreter, and to him I leave the completion of the prophecy, one way or the other.

WALLER.

Your Highneſs has nothing to do but to continue to talk to every man in his way; and every thing that ambition itſelf could deſire, or the good of the nation can demand,

mand, you will be able to bring about. Say but the word, and you can change one title to another; for, as you expreſſed it before your glorious victory at Dunbar, the Lord has delivered them into your hands.

CROMWELL.

We will have done with this ſubject for the preſent. Let me ſee you again, for I ſhall have occaſion to converſe with you. I muſt now to Council.

NOTE.

That the ſubject of this Conference is not fictitious, may be proved from the account of Waller himſelf, who alſo mentions his frequent acceſs to Cromwell, which undoubtedly furniſhed opportunities enough of communicating a great deal, if an amanuenſis had been at hand. The ſtory of his contract and converſation with the Devil, that ſeems not to be abſolutely incredible to Eachard the hiſtorian, would have looked ſingular on paper; it would have been ſhort, yet curious. Cromwell's enthuſiaſm and hypocriſy are too well known, and his ambition was ſeverely felt. Waller had all the fulſomeneſs of flattery charged on him

by the Protector, and though a man of honour, had too little courage to be at the head of any but the poetical party. His gratitude to Cromwell, in a fine copy of verſes on his death, when he had nothing to hope or to fear from him, was much to his commendation. King Charles, ſome years after his return, aſked Waller, alluding probably to this ſpirited compoſition, why he did not write as well on him as on the Uſurper? who replied in the language of a courtier, "We poets, Sir, ſucceed beſt in fiction." This anecdote has been told an hundred times. Excuſe it, Reader: the Note is not much the longer for it.

CONFERENCE IV.

WILLIAM LENTHAL, Esq. late Speaker of the Long Parliament, AND Sir EDWARD HYDE, ſoon afterwards created Earl of Clarendon.

[Held in 1660.]

LENTHAL.

ALL thoſe people who proſtrated themſelves at your levee, and behaved with ſo much flattery and ſubmiſſion, bowed the knee in the ſame manner, for many years, to the Speaker of the Long Parliament. They have done worſhipping me, and now the times are changed, they idolize the riſing Sun.

HYDE.

You have had homage paid you long enough. Since your ſun is permitted to go down

down quietly, and does not ſet in blood, you ought to be ſatisfied. When mine gets paſt the meridian, I ſhall not expect to be followed much longer. I am not to be deceived nor delighted with the incenſe that is offered me on this occaſion. The attachment is more frequently to the ſtation than to the man, as you now experience. The ſcene that lately opened, diſplays more tokens of zeal than perhaps of ſincerity, and allowance is to be made accordingly. The Reſtoration accepts of new converts as well as of old friends, and promiſes an oblivion of its enemies. Round-heads, as well as Cavaliers, are permitted to partake of the preſent feſtivity.

LENTHAL.

I was not the laſt who came into the invitation of the royal family. It is known to ſeveral about the King, that the Reſtoration could not have taken place without my aſſiſtance. When the throne became vacant in forty-eight, I would have filled it with the heir of the kingdom, if my wiſhes or endeavours could have accompliſhed it. But it was not the Lord's time till now.

HYDE.

HYDE.

I believe you ſat in the Speaker's chair, with no ill-will to monarchy, nor to epiſcopacy.

LENTHAL.

Nor to the late King.

HYDE.

And yet, you did not take any methods to prevent the deſperate votes againſt him.

LENTHAL.

I had not ſagacity enough to think it poſſible the Independents would have proceeded to the laſt violence. Perhaps I had not ſtrength of mind to do what ſome others in my place might have attempted. I was cajoled and outwitted by Cromwell, Ireton, and ſome more of that faction. But it is no wonder I was over-reached by them, when they were too cunning and daring for the Houſe and the whole nation. I was but a cypher amongſt ſuch glaring figures. I was conſidered as much a bauble as my mace, which Cromwell afterwards jeſted upon, when he broke

broke in upon rule and order, and expelled us.

HYDE.

Your timidity did as much harm to the royal cauſe, as could have been effected by your malice.

LENTHAL.

Thoſe who elected me, knew how to make me their inſtrument. I trembled in the chair like Felix, on another occaſion, when the King came to demand the five Members; but it was concealed under the prudence of my reply, that I had no eyes to ſee, nor tongue to ſpeak with, but what the Houſe was pleaſed to give me. My conſtant behaviour was that of an obedient ſervant of the Houſe, of which yourſelf, whilſt you continued amongſt us, was a witneſs down to the preſent convention. I became the leſs willing to quit and fling off my robes, when I thought a ſucceſſor might eaſily be found, who could do more miſchief.

HYDE.

But you was reconciled at laſt to your ſituation, and became very eaſy. You could bend

bend like a willow to every power that became uppermoſt. You accommodated yourſelf to the Rump and the Uſurper, and, but for the tide turning in favour of Monarchy, you would have been content to have died in the Chair. You was ready to accept any title or mark of honour from their hands. I mean not, at this ſeaſon, to reproach you, but only to obſerve upon you.

LENTHAL.

I am ſure you are of too noble a diſpoſition to condemn with ſeverity the vanity and weakneſs of a doating old man. I wept, and covered myſelf with ſackcloth and aſhes in private, when the ſentence againſt the King was executed. If I ſeemed to acquieſce under my new taſk-maſters, it was in common with the ſubmiſſion of wiſer and better men than myſelf. Monarchy appeared to be buried with the King, and I imagine you were taught to believe ſo on the other ſide of the water. Whether the remains of the Long Parliament, or General Monk, the Sword, or a Republic, was to govern, the Law, the Conſtitution, and the King, ſeemed to be out of

every body's view and expectations. As ſoon as a chance preſented itſelf, of ſhaking off the yoke of democracy, I contributed every thing in my power to bring over the King.

HYDE.

It could not have been in your power to have kept him out. The ſpirit of the nation was ſo ſtrong for monarchy, that no ſingle hand could hold it down. The King diſcovered ſuch joy, lighted up in the countenances of his ſubjects, all the way from Dover, that he ſaid, he was ſure it muſt have been his own fault that he was kept out of his dominions ſo long.

LENTHAL.

Every difficulty was removed by the well-penned declaration from Breda *, which breathes ſo much moderation and comfort to all men who have been miſtaken or miſled. Neither Parliament nor people, after that was ſent over, wiſhed to impoſe any ſhackles or make terms with him.

* This declaration was drawn up by Hyde, and Lenthal knew that very well.

HYDE.

HYDE.

There is no neceſſity for doing it. For the King is of ſo true a judgment, has ſo good a temper, beſides being pretty well paſt the giddy age of pleaſure, and has ſuch a proper memory of the hardſhips he has undergone at home and abroad, that a treaty with him would have ſpoiled all. I have no doubt this Parliament will be a healing one, and make the errors and enormities of that of forty-one, which elected you to the chair, be forgot, or only remembered as the rock which helped to ſhipwreck the conſtitution of Church and State.

LENTHAL.

You are likely to enjoy the bleſſings of the new reign, and are qualified to influence by your counſels your Sovereign, to make his people in love with monarchy, and to adviſe how to ſteer between privilege and prerogative.

HYDE.

If one ever comes in competition with the other, the prerogative, in my judgment, muſt

be made to give way to privilege. For it was almoſt the dying advice of a very wiſe father, not to let, as the profeſſion of the law generally inclines men to do, prerogative run riot, and trample upon the liberty of the ſubject. It will be the people's own fault if they are not completely happy. The King will grant a pardon to all but whom the Parliament excepts, which will be only thoſe who had a hand in his father's death. I believe he will not have a foe in the whole kingdom, but the obſtinate adherents to the Old Cauſe, and the Solemn League and Covenant.

LENTHAL.

I have to thank you for hearing me ſo patiently, and permitting me to remove any ungracious miſconceptions of me. I am too ancient and infirm, to be capable of doing any more ſervice or further harm. I am forbid even to hope to ſee the halcyon days you prophecy. I wiſh your maſter may have ſufficient confidence in you, and that you may obtain, not the camelion kind of reſpect which comes and goes, and is the lot of all

Lord

Lord Chancellors for the time being, but the reverence and the prayers of all good Engliſhmen.

NOTE.

In the laſt volume of that uſeful compilation, the Parliamentary Hiſtory, is the apology of old Lenthal, for his political behaviour, which may be conſidered as *his laſt dying words*, and with which this narration remarkably well agrees. His deſcendant, ſtill living at Burford, relates the traditionary ſtory of this viſit of his great anceſtor to Sir Edward Hyde, and of what paſſed between them. So that the Editor has not the ſmalleſt doubt, that what is recited is ſubſtantially true. This is inſerted to prevent the ſcepticiſm of the Reader. Lenthal made his peace at the Reſtoration, which he ſurvived about three years, and died forgot and forgiven by the Court. He held the Maſterſhip of the Rolls whilſt he was Speaker of the Houſe of Commons.

The virtuous but auſtere Lord Clarendon was baſely given up by the King, to pleaſe whom he conſented to go into baniſhment, though his integrity prompted him to ſtand a public trial. It is probable his innocence would not have preſerved

preſerved him; for the popular diſlike, though unmerited, the malice of the King and of Lady Caſtlemain, and the violence of ſome of the new Miniſters, and the death or defection of the old, would have impriſoned him in the Tower; and, perhaps, have put his life in jeopardy. The anecdote, of the advice to Lord Clarendon by his father, a Gentleman of Wiltſhire, not to ſtrain the prerogative againſt the liberty of the ſubject, if he came to be at the head of his profeſſion, is probably alluded to in the account of his own life: but it is given at full length in the Firſt Volume of Biſhop Burnet's maſterly Hiſtory of his own Times.

CONFERENCE V.

LORD DANBY, LORD DEVONSHIRE, LORD DELAMERE.

[Juſt before the Revolution in 1688.]

DELAMERE.

IF one of the ſpies of the Court could trace us to this privacy, a meſſenger would be diſpatched into Scarſdale, to fetch us up and carry us before the Council. I have had a narrow eſcape for my life very lately; but I am willing to venture it once more, againſt popery and arbitrary power. I am of opinion, that when the nation is delivered, it muſt be by force or miracle. It would be great preſumption to expect the latter; and therefore our deliverance muſt be by force, and I hope this is the right time for it. I have ſignified my opinion and inclinations. Which of your Lordſhips will ſecond me?

DEVON-

DEVONSHIRE.

Firſt, let me beg your pardon, Lord Danby, for the violent oppoſition I gave to your adminiſtration in the laſt reign. I truſted there were better grounds for the impeachment that was moved for againſt you by Winnington, than were made out afterward. I was induced to believe you were a tool to France, and an enemy to your country. I had no other diſlike to you, but ſuch as Brutus exhibited againſt Cæſar. After having given my hearty vote for the bill of Excluſion, introduced by my dear friend Lord Ruſſel, (pardon me, my Lords, if the bare mention of his name brings tears into my eyes at this diſtance of time!) you will not wonder, if, in my enthuſiaſm for a good cauſe, and as a repreſentative of the people, I endeavoured to bring to public juſtice the Miniſter of that time, whom I really thought as highly criminal as his Maſter, who was too great to be puniſhed.

DANBY.

Your Lordſhip's candid acknowledgment of your error, is ſufficient to make us have confidence

confidence in each other, and to engage without reſerve in the dangerous buſineſs we are met upon. When I ſet up the ſtatue of the King's father, at Charing-Croſs, out of my regard to Monarchy, which was come to be in faſhion again, and becauſe I was an old Cavalier, I little thought, that within twenty years, I ſhould ſee the propriety of relaxing from my high principles, and aſſert the neceſſity of reſiſtance to the preſent Government.

DELAMERE.

I think the curſe of King James upon any of his poſterity, who ſhould turn Papiſt, muſt fall, like the vengeance from heaven, upon his grandſon. What dependence can we have upon his word, when, during the debate on the Teſt Act, he declared, that his religion ſhould be a private matter between God and himſelf, and that it ſhould not interfere with his public character? To perpetuate our evils, a ſon, whether a legitimate one or a pretender, muſt be a matter of more enquiry, is introduced to the ſucceſſion, to undo all the bleſſings of the Reformation. A Nuntio

has had a public audience at Windſor, and Caſtlemain is gone Ambaſſador to the Pope. We muſt ſtand up for our religion and our liberty. When they are gone, there is nothing worth enjoying or contending for. We all heard, a few ſeſſions ago, that eminent patriot Lord Shafteſbury pronounce, that popery and ſlavery will fain go hand in hand together, but that whichever goes firſt, the other is ſure to follow.

DEVONSHIRE.

With ſhame, I acknowledge I have not lived under ſuch a viſible influence of religion and morality, as either of your Lordſhips. But I hope I ſhall mend. Pleaſure has too often run away with me; but I have ever been a man of honour, and have loved my country. I overlook the affront I received from the King (whoſe father and brother were relieved in their diſtreſs by my family, for which they met with an ill return), and the exorbitant fine ſet upon me, for ſtriking Culpeper with my cane. A Cavendiſh can at this time enter into oppoſition, only upon public

public ground. I am not ſo blindly devoted to Monarchy as an Oſborn, nor have I been in arms againſt the Roundheads, as a Booth. I inherit the noble principle, which led Lord Ruſſel to the ſcaffold,—That protection and obedience are reciprocal duties, and that the notion of a limited monarchy carries with it a juſtification of reſiſtance. With as much ſerioufneſs and fortitude as your Lordſhip's, I am ready to act my part. My Lord Danby, you are a man of wide experience. What methods do you adviſe to be taken, to deliver your country from bondage?

DANBY.

Argyle's invaſion, and Monmouth's defeat, and the mercileſs executions that followed, have ſtruck ſuch a terror every where, that the people are hardly recovered. But the preſſingneſs of the danger to our liberties, and the probability of the King's accepting an army and a navy from France, that may make an entire conqueſt of us, render it neceſſary we ſhould not loſe a moment's time. My intelligence runs, that this offer can only

be oppoſed in the Cabinet by Lord Sunderland, who is daily loſing ground, and may be ſhut up in the Tower. An invitation under our hands and ſeals, to the Prince of Orange, to come over to our deliverance, is abſolutely and immediately to be reſolved upon.

DELAMERE.

I am not certain that the Prince has acted an honourable part by Monmouth. But we have nobody elſe to look up to for aſſiſtance. It is long ſince I thought myſelf abſolved from paying allegiance to King James. I owe him none, and I will never pay him any. I am reſolved to fight againſt him, and will die ſingle with my ſword in my hand, rather than pay him any obedience. My hand and heart ſhall go to your propoſed invitation of the Prince. When his anſwer arrives, and we are ſatisfied with the heads of his declaration, I will call out my tenants and dependents, and, at a moment's warning, raiſe Cheſhire againſt the King.

DEVONSHIRE.

None but ſuch a hero as the Prince of Orange is fit to oppoſe to the King's army. His anceſtor reſcued his country from oppreſſion and the Spaniſh Inquiſition, and the life of his deſcendent has been a continual warfare againſt the power of France, who aims at univerſal monarchy.

DELAMERE.

In a Proteſtant cauſe, I have no doubt but the King's army will deſert him, and come over to us.

DANBY.

The Prince of Orange, my Lords, is a great politician, and a man of vaſt ambition and extraordinary perſeverance. The late and the preſent King always ſuſpected his deſign of placing himſelf upon the throne, even in their lifetime. I have no doubt he will readily comply with an invitation from the Clergy, Nobility, and Gentry, and bring with him a ſufficient force to retrieve us from our preſent ſituation. But what are we to

expect

expect from him afterward? Is he to return to his Stadtholderſhip, or to continue here, and to preſide over us in the name of Regent or King?

DEVONSHIRE.

I am not for looking ſo far forward. At all events, I am for calling him over, and for ſending him as many names as our intereſt and the goodneſs of our cauſe can procure.

DELAMERE.

If we draw the ſword, we muſt fling away the ſcabbard. I am not for a Commonwealth. The tyranny of that we have lately felt. And we have been made ſick enough of Monarchy, ſince the Reſtoration. I can tell you what I would not have. The preſent King is not to be truſted any longer, and I would not have him rule over us. Let the wiſdom of the nation in a convention determine what is to be done with him. It muſt be put out of his power to hurt us. I remember an expreſſion of Sir William Temple's, that has taught me a great deal. It is this, that though a King of England may not have it in his

power to do much for the good of his country, he always is able to do a great deal towards its ruin. The preſent ſtate of things is a confirmation of the obſervation.

DANBY.

Nothing that my experience can ſuggeſt ſhall be wanting on this national occaſion. The court of the Prince of Orange has been much viſited of late. Several Engliſhmen, under the pretence of travelling, have been offering their ſervice. The eyes of all Europe are upon the Prince. Many on this and on the other ſide of the water are in expectation of ſomething extraordinary to happen. But, whence it is to originate, is yet in the womb of time. Our enemies at Whitehall cannot penetrate our preſent ſcheme, nor will be induced to believe the warlike preparations in Holland, and in other places, can poſſibly be employed here. The King depends upon his ſtanding army; upon the late determination of the Judges, in Weſtminſter-hall, that he is above the laws; upon the paſſively obedient principles of the Church

of

of England, and the courage of Father Petre. In caſe of a revolution in our favour, whom you would place on the throne, or keep from it, muſt be a diſcuſſion before a free Parliament; for the appeal, in my judgment, muſt not be made to the people at large. My hand ſhall be to the Invitation, for which my head muſt be as liable to be forfeited as certainly as either of your Lordſhips'. It ſhall be my part to undertake to make Yorkſhire declare for the Prince. It is my wiſh, that he may land on our coaſt, where he will find many friends, and where my intereſt lies. This weighty buſineſs will require our frequent communications under this roof, where poſterity ought to be informed, the plan was firſt laid, for recovering the religion, laws, and liberties of the people of England, in the year 1688, at that period in the moſt imminent danger.

NOTE.

To this meeting and converſation Lord Danby muſt allude in his Memoirs. Theſe three diſtinguiſhed

tinguiſhed perſonages met at a little village, called Whittington, in Derbyſhire. The room they ſat in, ſtill goes by the name of *The Plotting Parlour*. The Editor ſees, or thinks he ſees, the long-headed politician, in Lord Danby; the determined Whig, in Lord Delamere; and the diſintereſted patriot, in Lord Devonſhire; a character that continues to ſhine in his deſcendents. To theſe three noblemen, noble in every ſenſe of the word, this nation is principally indebted for the Revolution.

CONFERENCE VI.

ROBERT EARL OF OXFORD, AND MATTHEW PRIOR, ESQ.

[Suppoſed to be held on the 27th of June, 1715.]

PRIOR.

MY dear friend Harry has thought fit to ſtep aſide, and has left poor Mat in the lurch, to anſwer for all. He ſet off this morning for France, and addreſſed a letter he left behind him, to Lanſdown, to be circulated all over the town; declining a public trial, he ſays, becauſe he is aſſured his enemies were determined to take off his head.

OXFORD.

Then it is high time for you and me to look about us, and arm againſt a parliamentary attack. You have already prevaricated. You promiſed to tell what you knew; and ſince you

you now are reſolved to tell nothing, you muſt not be ſurpriſed a Committee ſhould behave like Inquiſitors at this juncture.

PRIOR.

I was ſo graciouſly received on my return from Paris, by the new King, to whom I was preſented by Lord Dorſet, that I was diſpoſed to ſatisfy his Miniſters in any thing they wanted to know. The next day your Lordſhip taught me a better leſſon.

OXFORD.

The unexpected death of the Queen broke all my meaſures. I could ſoon have done myſelf juſtice, and left ſome people as low as I found them. Had ſhe lived a little longer, I could have made it as neceſſary for her ſucceſſor to have been well with me, as it was my intereſt to be well with him. Upon a particular incident four years ago, Bolingbroke ſhewed me, he was become my rival for power. His ambition broke the ſtrength of our party, and his cowardice has ruined himſelf. His fears will prevent him from truſting himſelf in the hands of the Whigs,

and an attainder muſt of courſe paſs againſt him.

PRIOR.

They will endeavour to make your Lordſhip the ſcape-goat on the occaſion. The people are made to believe they are betrayed, and they are led on to aſk for blood. I hope your abilities will be rouſed in the vindication of your honour, and the defence of your friends, and that your ſkill in the management of parties and the tempers of mankind, will enable you to throw your accuſers into confuſion. I can diſcern by your looks, you are ready to face an impeachment. You will ſcorn, I am ſure, to run away.

OXFORD.

I can lie, or I can die, but I will not fly.

PRIOR.

There ſpoke the intrepid Stateſman. Your reſolute example would keep up my ſpirits, even though poor Mat's courage were none of the beſt. I ſhall not deſert your cauſe during the fiery trial. Let the Committee be

be long or ſhort in their interrogatories, I will be ſhort in my anſwers. As ſoon as the enquiry is ſet on foot, Mat will take care not to accuſe himſelf, nor bring his Maſter into jeopardy.

OXFORD.

A Firſt Miniſter ought to be ready at a moment's warning to enter on a defence of his conduct, and to anſwer for every ſtep he has taken, with his life. He muſt not heſitate to meet the vengeance of Parliament, nor even the madneſs of the populace. I foreſaw, that if the Hanover ſucceſſion took place, before I was reſtored, no mercy would be ſhewed me, nor my coadjutors, for what we had done in the laſt years of the Queen. This I experienced at Greenwich, whither I went to pay my duty to the King, who turned his back upon me, though he beſtowed not ſo much as a frown any where elſe. Ormond is diſgraced, and if I have any judgment, will not ſtay at home, but liſt himſelf into the Jacobite faction abroad, if he is not already one of that number.

PRIOR.

PRIOR.

The King has not been rightly informed of the eminent part you took, in regard to the Act of Settlement. Marlborough and the Whigs have perſuaded him, that you intended to bring over the Pretender.

OXFORD.

I acknowledge my conduct might juſtify ſome ſuſpicions of that nature, for it was rather a myſterious one. It appeared ſtrange enough to a ſtander-by, that Harley, deſcended from that Parliamentarian name, ſhould put himſelf at the head of Tories and Jacobites, and that Godolphin, a ſlave to the Houſe of Stuart, ſhould be in the front of Preſbyterians and Republicans. I had no other game to play, than what I did. I have been ill-uſed by the Whigs, and in a ſpirit of revenge I might have laid hold of ſome favourable opportunities that have offered, of placing the Pretender on the Throne. But my principles got the better of my reſentments. I have been as cautious of committing myſelf to my

friends, as to my opponents. The Whigs have thought me a Tory, and ſome few of the Tories ſuſpect I am a Whig. Knowing how ſincerely I meant to advance the title of the Houſe of Hanover, I truſted, when the King came over, I ſhould receive his thanks, and be a ſecond time Lord Treaſurer. In this confidence, I actually promiſed the Seals to Lord Cowper, for whom you remember I procured the Peerage. Things have taken a very different turn from all my calculations.

PRIOR.

Your Lordſhip, I am convinced, will not be tried for ſelling the peace to France, for a round ſum of money. Your noble contempt of riches, and the preſent decay of your fortune, will ſecure you againſt a charge of that ſort. Your known character for making a ſecret of every thing, and every thing a ſecret, will prevent you from much abuſe of confidence. Happily you can produce the authority under which you acted, and we are both ready to juſtify the Utrecht

treaty.

treaty, or to ſuffer for it. For my part, I could as cheerfully bear you company to the Tower, as to Scriblerus's Club, or to our Saturday's dinner at Windſor, as formerly. I am ſomewhat concerned that your health does not ſeem capable of enduring the cloſeneſs of impriſonment, and the fatigue of a public trial.

OXFORD.

The life of an inſignificant old man is hardly worth preſerving. But when ſo much is at ſtake, and the Houſe of Commons is likely to be my accuſer, like penſionary De Wit, I will be careful of my health, however careleſs of my life, to plead my cauſe the better. The King in his own nature is by no means ſanguinary. He would not lend his name to the intrigues and intended violence of the Low Church Party, in the Queen's time. How far he will be diſpoſed to check or to cheriſh ſeverity, I cannot divine at preſent. By lenity, and an oblivion of what is paſt, he may ſecure a peaceable reign. But, by provoking the High Party and the Jacobites, of which there is a great leaven in the kingdom,

dom, he will make them deſperate, and probably riſe againſt his government. An Act of Parliament King ought to take care how he throws himſelf into the arms of a Faction, and governs by it. A few days will make it viſible, how far he is to be under the influence of a few deſigning men, and how far Marlborough's Ducheſs may inſtigate her huſband to attempt to bring me to the block. But I have in my poſſeſſion, to produce, if hard puſhed, what will terrify the Duke from further proſecution.

PRIOR.

The Marlborough Junto are enraged enough againſt me, for the poignancy of my pen. But I am not conſiderable enough for their malice to exert itſelf upon. The Whigs have a mind to retaliate for the Partition and Ryſwick Treaties, and to purſue the advice Lord Somers conſtantly gave them, to let the Utrecht buſineſs be completed, and afterwards to find fault with it, and pull down the makers of it. Mat's correſpondence will be diſcovered, and he may be puniſhed for doing

the work that St. John cut out for him. They ſay he has prudentially taken care to deſtroy or carry away the books and minutes that might materially affect himſelf. But the blow is aimed at a perſon of greater conſequence than either the Secretary or myſelf, and, if he falls, he will be great in his fall.

OXFORD.

Whether the ſtorm is to blow over, or to rage with more turbulence, I am ready to cry out, "Juſtum et tenacem." You know the reſt. I ſhall not be wanting in the juſtification of my adminiſtration, or of my Royal Miſtreſs, nor to enforce the ſtate of public affairs, that demanded an end to be put to the war. I could have made a better peace, if the Whigs would have let me. With my dying breath, I ſhould pronounce the treaty, already approved by four parliaments, and even ſuch as it is at laſt, a beneficial one, and what, if it was to come over again, I would make myſelf anſwerable for, in order to keep down Marlborough, and to keep out the Pretender.

Pretender. My expreſſion may be oracular, but I may be more explicit hereafter.

PRIOR.

If Hannibal is at the gates, there is no time for your favourite procraſtination. Recollect the ironical recommendation of the humorous Swift of the emblematical ſnail for your creſt. Who would have thought, only a few weeks ago, that Prior, the Plenipotentiary to Lewis the Fourteenth, ſhould, all on a ſudden, be likely to be confined, like a common man, in a ſmall room, in ſome Meſſenger's houſe!

OXFORD.

When that happens to be the caſe, unleſs you are debarred the uſe of pen and ink, you may amuſe yourſelf in writing ſongs and lampoons. As you have done with the trade of Politics, the Muſes, who think you have forſook them, would be glad to receive you again. Birds, that have not their full liberty, muſt be content to ſing in a cage. Or, to relieve the dullneſs of confinement, what think you of meditating a Hiſtory of your own

Times, towards which, when at full leiſure, Harley may contribute ſomething, as old Burleigh did to Camden?

PRIOR.

Your jocularity will never leave you. To the ſurprize of all the members of the Club, which you attended pretty conſtantly, your genius even furniſhed you with crambo verſes, when you had half the affairs of Europe in your head, which were equal to any of our extempore productions. If ever I incline my pen to Hiſtory, I ſhall tell the world you gave me the firſt hint. But the moments are too precious for your Lordſhip to throw them away in being witty upon me. Let me finiſh my viſit with obſerving, that your inſtantaneous reply to the line of Swift,

Time and I 'gainſt any two—
Chance and I 'gainſt Time and you—

is really prophetic.

OXFORD.

In the ſame ſpirit of prophecy, I declare, all will be well again with us both. I am impatient

patient to anſwer in my place in the Houſe of Peers, and ready to abide by their reſolutions. I am convinced nothing will be made out againſt Mat nor Oxford. I prognoſticate, that Harley, who eſcaped from the knife of Guiſcard, at the Council-table (which Prior has put upon poetical record), ſhall not ſuffer by the ſentence of the axe, for high-treaſon, on a ſcaffold on Tower-Hill.

NOTE.

The aged and well-informed Lord Bathurſt might have been conſulted, if theſe Papers could have been obtained ſooner for the public peruſal, about the juſtneſs of this Conference. His intimacy with the Miniſter and the Plenipotentiary might have recogniſed this remarkable and familiar converſation. The repiy that Oxford makes to Prior, on being made acquainted that Bolingbroke was gone off, was told to the Editor, forty years ago, by a gentleman, whoſe ſituation in life enabled him to know the truth, at leaſt the credibility of it. Four lines from Pope's Panegyric on Lord Oxford muſt be quoted, as they exhibit ſome praiſeworthy parts of his character, in the moſt beautiful numbers,

A ſoul

A ſoul ſupreme, in each hard inſtance try'd,
Above all pain, all anger, and all pride;
The rage of power, the blaſt of public breath,
The luſt of lucre, and the dread of death!

Oxford was impriſoned two years in the Tower. His friends at laſt demanded a trial for him, and his enemies could make nothing out againſt him. He was not terrified, when the axe was carried before him into Weſtminſter-hall. A quarrel aroſe between the two Houſes, which checked the proceedings. The King is reported to have diſcountenanced the proſecution. Harley's courage and innocence preſerved him. The Ducheſs of Marlborough was the moſt diſappointed and enraged perſon in the nation, on account of his acquittal. Poor Prior ſuffered a cloſe and tedious confinement, in a Meſſenger's houſe, in Brownlow-ſtreet. Whilſt the Plenipo was deprived of his perſonal liberty, his free-born Muſe was delivered of the original poem of Alma. His intention, as expreſſed on his monument in Weſtminſter-abbey, of writing the Hiſtory of his own Time (towards which ſome fragments were publiſhed indeed after his death), helps to make this Conference more plauſible.

CONFERENCE VII.

SIR ROBERT WALPOLE, AND MR. PELHAM.

[Suppoſed on the ſecond or third of February, 1741.]

WALPOLE.

IT is my determined reſolution never to enter the Houſe of Commons again. The deciſion of the Chippenham Election is the ruin of my power. Such a deſertion of one's friends muſt haſten the period of any Adminiſtration. I will not venture myſelf on a more important queſtion. The times, perhaps, may require the novelty of another ſyſtem. The people will not bear a perpetual Miniſter, any more than a perpetual Parliament. Continual oppoſition muſt prevail at laſt. The heir apparent of the Crown declares himſelf againſt me. It is not for the welfare or the peace of the King, that I ſhould

ſhould remain longer at the head of affairs. I ſhall be ſatisfied if his interpoſition ſhould ſecure me againſt the ſanguinary fury of my enemies, if my innocence cannot.

PELHAM.

If you can reſign your places without regret, and make tolerable terms for yourſelf, and withal, be content to paſs the remainder of your life amongſt your books and your pictures at Houghton, I cannot but commend the greatneſs of your mind. If you leave us to ourſelves, I have to wiſh your great parliamentary talents may not be miſſed, and that our enemies, foreign and domeſtic, may not take advantage, when you have given up the helm. The King knows very well how to gain over ſome of the leading men; but I believe he would rather that you ſhould give way, in confidence of his protection, with a peerage and a penſion.

WALPOLE.

England is a popular government, and the honour of the nation is to be gratified even in turning out a Miniſter, when they are taught

taught ſo loudly to aſk for it. It was fore-told me by ſome of my friends, before the laſt general election, that I ſhould loſe, in the courſe of a few ſeſſions, my uſual majorities. Even though my Maſter ſhould be willing to ſtipulate to prolong my political exiſtence to the next Parliament, yet the malevolence of party would purſue me, and would over-take me, in the long run. I mean, by the appearance of a voluntary reſignation, to pre-vent the diſgrace of being turned out, in conſequence of a rude addreſs to the Throne. The King's ſervice muſt not be obſtructed. I, who had the honour to make up a differ-ence between the preſent King and his Father, will not be the cauſe of a breach between the Prince and my Royal Maſter. I have been permitted to take the lead in the affairs of Great Britain for twenty years. Let me ſee who will have ſuch good fortune, and ſtand his ground ſo long, without incurring more of the public hatred or contempt. I was not kept down by the furious Sunderland. I have been able to keep out the cankered Boling-broke from his ſeat in Parliament and the

Council. He is now conſulted as the oracle of the Party, and his tongue and pen are venomouſly employed againſt me. If I have loved power, I have not injured my country whilſt in poſſeſſion of it. I have not offended againſt any known law of the land. I have lulled the nation into tranquillity, and enlarged its commerce. I ſtaved off the Merchant's war as long as I could. The oratory of Captain Jenkins, at our bar, bore down like a torrent all miniſterial objections to hoſtilities againſt Spain. When the nation was reſolved, I gave into warlike meaſures, and I leave my antagoniſts to get out as well as they can. I hope, hereafter, when the popular madneſs has ſubſided, that your moderation and capacity will raiſe you to the higheſt employments. If my recommendation at this juncture can have weight, it ſhould be, to place Lord Wilmington, who is not conſidered as a party man, at the head of the Treaſury when I am withdrawn.

PELHAM.

The intemperate zeal without doors, and the miſchievous factions within, would alone

diſcourage any inclination to undertake the guidance of the political veſſel through the ſtorm. It is impoſſible to judge what will be the conſequence of your giving up at this critical moment. The Houſe contains a great number of angry Whigs, diſcontented Tories, of active Republicans, and open or concealed Jacobites. Unleſs ſomething is done to prevent it, they, in their implacable wrath, may paſs ſome abſurd Reſolutions, that may break in upon the conſtitution; for they have the government in their own hands.

WALPOLE.

Make yourſelf eaſy. The multitude, of courſe, will be dazzled and deceived. The Houſe will ſoon be reſtored to its ſenſes. When the man with the Blue Riband is vaniſhed from his place, and the Demagogues find that Government is not to be taken by ſtorm, they will not agree in relation to the Public on any important point; they will be contending for places and penſions for themſelves and their adherents. Even eloquence may be mute, when I am gone. The Crown, by its

neceſſary influence, and by a judicious application of it, will prevent things from falling to pieces. A Pulteney, a Sandys, a Lyttelton, or a Pitt, will talk from the Treaſury-bench, as I have done. The Houſe muſt have its Manager, as well as its Speaker. By laying hold of this important inſtant of taking my leave of public affairs, I ſhall prevent the contrivance of any popular petitions, and the ſetting on foot of any deſperate aſſociations (in imitation of thoſe which diſturbed the kingdom a century ago), which would be chriſtened by mock patriotiſm, the conſtitutional fourth part of the Legiſlature. Matters are not gone ſo far, as to force the King to take the moſt obnoxious men into his ſervice. The Electors are privileged to chooſe their Repreſentatives, but are by no means competent to nominate to the Cabinet. Though I have no reaſon to be pleaſed with the complexion of the Houſe, yet I had rather ſubmit to the exile of a private ſtation by their vote, than afford occaſion to my deluded countrymen to become their maſters; to intimidate their harangues, and to preſcribe their reſolves.

PELHAM.

PELHAM.

Depend upon it, under the ſpecious neſs of deſtroying corruption, the more violent will move for a bill in favour of ſhort parliaments, and againſt all placemen and penſioners.

WALPOLE.

Nothing is ſaid to be ſo like an old Adminiſtration, as a new one. We know, that neither home affairs nor foreign alliances can proceed, if a Parliament has but the length of one, or even three ſeſſions. A perſon who is a fit Repreſentative for three years, is as fit for the delegation of ſeven. Some of my opponents have not ſeen an hour's buſineſs in the courſe of their lives, and will find themſelves miſerably at a loſs when they are put into office and come to act. A Country Gentleman ſees with different eyes from the experienced Stateſman, and will diſcover, when he accepts a good place, the neceſſity of many things he once could not conceive. You will have ſpeedy and frequent occaſions of obſerving the blunders and embarraſſment of

of theſe politicians, in their noviciate. Take my word for it, the new Miniſters, whoever they may be, will ſtrangle every bill of reformation in its birth, notwithſtanding their engagements to their conſtituents.

PELHAM.

Pulteney has puſhed you ſo hard, that nothing but the bringing him into temper will check retroſpective enquiries. The royal hand that ſtruck his name out of the Privy Council-book, muſt reinſtate him there. The King muſt ſtoop to ſolicit him to interfere between the rights of the Crown and the demands of the People, or all will be loſt. He has more ſenſe than to give into the idea of a Commonwealth. A Peerage and a ſeat in the Cabinet will content him. He will not venture, after his vehement aſſeverations, to think of filling a reſponſible office. His immenſe property will ſecure him againſt co-operating towards making innovations. His avarice is yet greater than his revenge or his ambition, and it would be worth while to lay a bait for it. When he is well with the King, or rather,

rather, when the King is well with him, buſineſs will begin to flow in its right channel. I ſhould not be ſurpriſed to ſee your former aſſociate (who is as good an old Whig as a Pelham or a Walpole, and whoſe original quarrel was becauſe the one could bear no equal, and the other no ſuperior) deſirous to place himſelf on the ſame woolſack, in the Houſe of Peers. You will find, he will wink at the diſtribution of ſecret ſervice money, and the ſubſidies to foreign princes. A Miniſter, or even a King, who gives nothing, or has nothing to give, will not be permanent.

WALPOLE.

Corruption is a frightful word; yet, under the leſs profligate one of influence, you will be obliged to practiſe it. There is no carrying on government without it. To expect to bring over to unanimity of opinion a whole Houſe of Commons, and to carry an important queſtion by the dint of reaſon alone, would be folly in the extreme. But if the influence of money ſhould ceaſe, I ſhould dread

dread as much as my friend Sherlock would do, to ſee an independent Houſe of Commons, as an independent King, or an independent Houſe of Lords. I have been called the Father of Corruption; but I have done no more than my predeceſſors in my ſtation have been obliged to do. When prerogative ended, influence in Parliament began, and became a neceſſary engine of every Adminiſtration. I have converted many a bigotted Jacobite into a moderate man; and have really checked the forwardneſs of ſome, who came into my meaſures with ſo much pliability, that it has made even a Walpole bluſh. I have found it neceſſary to conſult the pulſe of many a wavering ſenator; and I conclude, from my extenſive experience, that almoſt every man has his price. Sir John Barnard wants popularity; and that is a reward no Engliſh Miniſter has to ſpare. When I obſerved any one blazing like a meteor into glaring obſervation, and likely to make a figure againſt me or my Maſter, I have thought him the Cæſar againſt whom Cato would

would have allowed me to bribe. Whatever may be laid to my charge, of profuſion or inadvertency, I have not heard that a ſingle Member, who has voted with me, has complained he has voted againſt his conſcience. When the Revolution made the people leſs afraid of their ſovereigns, the milder management of men, through their paſſions and their intereſts, and even their amuſements, has taken place. The gratifications of the Court are become neceſſary to win gentlemen to attend, even to make a Houſe, and to act in their legiſlative capacities. I ſhall carry with me the conſolatory reflection, that I have kept within bounds the malignity of Whig and Tory; that I have ſaved the nation from the extravagance of war; that I have not rendered my Sovereign unpopular; that I have countermined the views of the Pretender; and that I have, at the right time, formed an intention of giving up my places, like a good citizen, to prevent any poſſible convulſion in the State. Conſider me no longer as a Member of the Lower Houſe. I ſhall be ſafe, as a Lord, among the Lords. Argyle, Carteret,

and Chesterfield know better than to become Tribunes of the People. Their ardour for a Continental war will make Hanover more odious than I have done, and themselves more ungracious. I wish they may not make its Elector so at last.

PELHAM.

The attention to the groans of Germany, and to the Pragmatic Sanction, will call the Public off from parliamentary squabbles; and if the Pretender makes an attempt, it will, in the end, strengthen the hands of the Crown, and oblige us to a greater unanimity.

WALPOLE.

Things are not yet ripe for an invasion from France, or for publicly avowing the Pretender's cause. I foresee I shall have remaining influence to make a division in the House, and among the chiefs, who are rising upon my ruins. But I will never think of returning back into power. I will have nothing to do for or against any future Administration. I will avoid every thing that can

tend

tend to the diſturbance of the royal counſels. For the remainder of my time, I will continue a quiet and a private ſubject. I am not ſure that I am philoſopher enough to bear retirement with dignity. I am afraid I ſhould not have been tired of the Public, if the Public had not been firſt tired of me. But I will endeavour to make a ſort of virtue of neceſſity. Of one advantage, from my change of condition, I ſhall be certain: That my ſeceſſion will relieve me from the clamours of the importunate, the revolt of friends, the greedineſs of rapine*, when I have nothing more to give, and from the baſeneſs of ingratitude.

* See Lord Orford's Letter to General Churchill.

NOTE.

This laſt Conference carries with it as authentic an appearance as any of the foregoing. There is not an expreſſion or ſentiment but what Sir Robert employed in his ſpeeches, or in confidential diſcourſe. His declaration, at the beginning of this *Talk*, was firſt made in the Lobby of the Houſe of Commons, and was heard by many

 perſons

perſons ſtill living. It is not at all unlikely he might unboſom himſelf to Mr. Pelham, in the manner related; ſince it is univerſally known he had a great and deſerved reſpect for that gentleman, who died, lamented by the whole nation, while Firſt Lord of the Treaſury, and Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Editor is ſorry to have it in his power to remark, that this conſummate and fallen Stateſman, when left amongſt his pictures and his books in Norfolk, did not, immediately on his retreat from public affairs, find himſelf perfectly at his eaſe. It would have been a lucky opportunity to have been preſent, and to have written down a ſingular converſation between Lord Orford and the late Lord Holland, in the library at Houghton. It would probably have had no ſmall reſemblance to a ſcene in Shakeſpeare, between Wolſey and Cromwell.

The Editor cannot avoid making a few obſervations on Sir Robert Walpole, created afterwards Earl of Orford, and not totally without applauſe on his conduct; eſpecially as ſome of the demagogues, who helped to pull him down, have confeſſed in the Houſe the error of their oppoſition. The greateſt objection to his long Adminiſtration, in the judgment of a late accompliſhed political writer and hiſtorian, is, the not having paid off more of the national debt.

debt. By his management he kept out the Pretender, which is more than his ſucceſſors could do. He was neither hated nor feared as a Miniſter. He had no evil intentions againſt public liberty. No man in private life had, or deſerved to have, more friends. He maintained the nation in profound peace, as long as he was permitted to do it. He was acquainted with public buſineſs in all its branches; and, in the opinion of Secretary Craggs, underſtood money affairs better than any man in England. He had the art of guiding the Houſe of Commons, on which, as the Ducheſs of Marlborough, when converted into an author, expreſſes herſelf, *ſo much depends*, beyond any Miniſter who ever ſat there. He was ſuperior to all in parliamentary knowledge, and in the conduct of a debate. His language, if it was not eloquence, may be pronounced as ſomething better. He was ſeldom known to loſe his temper, though he was often provoked. A haſty expreſſion, on the Petitions of the London Merchants, had like to have raiſed a ſtorm againſt him. 'By directing the favours of the Crown, which were at his command, and by the magical touch of the golden wand of Midas, he kept King, Lords, Commons, and the people of England, for many years, and at a moderate expence, from quarrelling with each other. Lord Cheſterfield, his

rival and enemy, who ſays he knew him well, concludes his character of him with confeſſing, that though he will not be reckoned amongſt the beſt men or the beſt Miniſters, " much leſs " ought he to be ranked among the worſt."

FINIS.

ERRATUM.

Page 70, line 13, *for* and innocence, *read* or innocence.